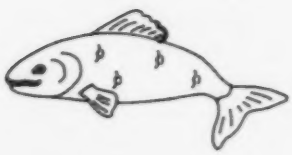
# MANITOBA FISHERIES STRATEGY



*March 1991*

Manitoba
Natural Resources
Fisheries

91-05550/

# TABLE OF CONTENTS


| | Page |
|---|---|
| FOREWORD | i |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| BRANCH FUNCTION AND STRUCTURE | 2 |
| THE ROLE OF POLICY AND LEGISLATION | 3 |
| OBJECTIVES | 4 |
| RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES | 5 |
| FISHERIES ISSUES AND MANAGEMENT APPROACHES | 7 |
| IMPLEMENTATION | 29 |

## FOREWORD

The Manitoba Fisheries Strategy was first drafted in 1981 and was expanded in 1983 to include Management Principles. Revisions are undertaken when needed and appropriate so the strategy will remain useful as conditions of Manitoba's fisheries change. At the same time the revision process serves as a useful indicator of progress in dealing with fisheries management issues and continues to indicate direction for our many and diverse management activities.

Input to and comment on this strategy is sought from all Fisheries Branch staff on a continuing basis. Similar reaction is expected from the departmental executive, our Minister and from the public. In this way, we can be more successful in pursuing our resource management objectives.

## INTRODUCTION

The fisheries of Manitoba contribute significantly to the provincial economy. It is important that they are managed in a manner that will assure the enhancement and protection of income, subsistence and recreational benefits now and in the future.

Fisheries Branch is guided in its management task by a series of objectives, principles, policies, legislation and guidelines. The branch recognizes the need for a written strategy to provide a long term direction for consistent and rational management of Manitoba fisheries. The strategy promotes a uniform understanding of management initiatives and facilitates Branch operations such as the priorization of activities, staff and budget allocation, project approval and integration of activities with other branches and agencies, thereby enhancing the prime branch function of service to the public. This strategy must also be flexible enough to permit adaptation to external change, therefore, a revision and review process has been incorporated.

An approach was adopted in the development of the strategy that centres on issues that affect management of the resource. The issues identified relate primarily to use of the resource and resultant long term benefits to society.

Although the emphasis of the strategy is on use of the resource, maintenance of healthy aquatic ecosystems and the continuing productivity of fish resources are essential for continuing, viable fisheries. This requires the systematic collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation of data regarding aquatic habitat and fish stocks, and the monitoring, predicting and mitigating of impacts to the fish resource from terrestrial and aquatic developments. Thus, biologically focused activities are an integral and essential component of sustainable fisheries management and development.

The strategy first describes Branch function and structure and outlines the role of policy and legislation. Basic objectives are then defined and management principles and policies are presented and discussed. Fisheries issues are identified along with management approaches to the issue and, lastly, the implementation process is outlined.

## BRANCH FUNCTION AND STRUCTURE

The most basic mandate of Fisheries Branch is to manage the fish resources of the Province so they can be used in a sustainable manner. This involves ensuring that native fish stocks are not harvested nor interfered with beyond their biological capacity to maintain themselves on a continuing basis, as well as allowing their use in a manner that benefits Manitoba both socially and economically. To accomplish this requires that Fisheries Branch undertake sufficient biological investigation of fish stocks and to then manage the use of the harvestable surplus of the stocks to meet legal commitments of government and allocate available harvest opportunities to fishermen's groups to best achieve social and economic objectives. It is also required that Fisheries Branch protect fish habitat from damage caused by developments and land use practices and, further, to mitigate potential damage and restore degraded habitat.

Fisheries Branch has organized itself to be effective in carrying out these responsibilities in a consistent manner. In general terms the development of guiding resource management policies is the responsibility of the central Sport and Commercial Management and Habitat Management sections.

The former section is responsible for the policies and programs that relate to the use of the resource. This includes co-ordination of legislative and regulatory development for such things as seasons, limits and fishing gear. It also includes the fundamental task of allocating available fish stocks between sport, commercial and domestic fishermen to appropriately meet social and economic goals. To do this, effective liaison is maintained with a variety of agencies such as the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation (FFMC), Travel Manitoba, Manitoba Wildlife Federation, commercial fishermen's associations, lodge and outfitters associations and the Tourism Industry of Manitoba (TIM).

The Habitat Management section has a similar mandate, but related to fish habitat. This section is responsible for developing a habitat classification and inventory system for the Branch and for designing and implementing habitat rehabilitation and enhancement projects. Branch participation in environmental review processes is also co-ordinated through this section. In doing the above a working liaison is maintained with, in particular, Manitoba Environment and federal Fisheries and Oceans.

The policies and programs established by the central sections are applied by regional branch staff, under the supervision of Regional Fisheries Managers, to deliver fisheries management programs of the regions. These staff interpret management policies for the user public by implementing and approving resource use activities and plans. They are also responsible for monitoring both the resource base and its use in the regions to be sure it is being used within its biological capacity and in the desired manner. It is primarily at the regional level that contact with users and local user organizations occur and user involvement in resource management is initiated.

Fish Culture section operates the provincial hatcheries and spawn-taking operations. They also administer the fish stocking activities of the Branch which are initiated and evaluated by the Regional Fisheries Managers.

## THE ROLE OF POLICY AND LEGISLATION

Programs, policies and management practices of Fisheries Branch are shaped by the legislation that mandates administration and management of the resource. The Fisheries Act Canada R.S.C. 1980 c. F-14 is the federal statute which is the foundation of fisheries management in Manitoba and all of Canada. The Manitoba Fishery Regulations C.R.C., 1978 C.843 are regulations made under this Act and in combination, provide the legal basis for the management and administration of Manitoba's fishery resource. Federal fisheries legislation also provides for the protection of fish habitat. Manitoba's Minister of Natural Resources is charged with the administration of the Manitoba Fisheries Regulations, but substantive change to these regulations requires federal approval through Privy Council Order. Provincial legislation in the form of the Manitoba Fishery Act (F90) and its regulations establishes the mandate of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation within Manitoba and authority for loans to be made to commercial fishermen by the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation (MACC).

Consistent with this legislation a number of principles, policies and practices have been developed which guide the management of fisheries toward provincially defined objectives. When managing any fishery the first consideration is to ensure that sufficient fish are protected to allow the stock to sustain itself over time. Fish surplus to this requirement are available for harvest.

Fundamental to the resource management process is the task of allocating available fish stocks to and between groups of fishermen. A priority of allocation has been established which serves as a guideline for allocating a finite fishery resource. In order of priority the allocation of the resource is:

- Conservation;
- Treaty Indian domestic fishing;
- Recreational angling;
- Commercial fishing, including commercial net fishing, commercial sport fishing, bait fishing and fish farming.

In addition to the above, policies and agreements that are the responsibility of other branches, departments and agencies also affect the management activities of the Fisheries Branch. For example, agreements such as the Northern Flood Agreement and forest management agreements all have an influence on branch activities.

## OBJECTIVES

An objective is a broad ideal that is sought over time. Because the fish resource makes valuable contribution to the province, Manitoba recognizes the need for **"fisheries management that will result in the greatest long term benefit to Manitobans and ensure survival and improvement of fish stocks"**.

To further define this major objective, four specific objectives are recognized. All are sought equally: allocation priority alone does not determine importance.

Objective one is **"to maintain healthy, productive fish populations"**. Sufficient stocks must be protected to maintain populations and produce harvestable surplus.

Objective two is **"to provide fish stocks required for Treaty Indian domestic fishing"**. This objective acknowledges the right of Treaty Indians to use the resource for domestic purposes and the importance of this use.

Objective three is **"to maintain and enhance angling opportunities for Manitobans to meet existing and future demands"**. Angling by Manitoba residents is considered a recreational activity, while sport fishing by non-residents is considered commercial activity.

Objective four is **"to establish and maintain a viable commercial fishing industry wherein participants can earn a reasonable return on their investment and time, with limited social disruption"**. Commercial fishing includes all fish harvest for commercial purposes: net fishing, tourist angling, bait fishing and fish farming.

The above objectives frame the mandate of Fisheries Branch as set down through legislation and the demands placed on the resource base by society.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Over time, Fisheries Branch, through experience and interpretation, and application and administration of government policy and legislation, has developed a series of management principles.

**Habitat conservation, enhancement and restoration is essential for stable, healthy and viable fisheries.** The Fisheries Branch endorses the Federal Fisheries objective of "no net loss" of habitat due to development. Where habitat degradation cannot be avoided, mitigation or compensation is required. Fisheries which have been impacted by past development may be rehabilitated through habitat restoration. Where development is not a factor, enhancement of habitat can often improve fisheries.

**The principle of sustainable yield is the primary factor in the management of any fishery.** Ensuring the health and continuance of fish populations is prerequisite to allowing harvest of the resource. To assure biological sustainability of the fish resource requires ongoing monitoring and assessment of stocks. Fish over and above those needed to maintain a particular stock of fish are considered a harvestable surplus available to fishermen.

**The allocation of fish between and among users is based on legislation and policy objectives.** Once the conservation allocation has been made to maintain a sustainable resource, harvestable surplus is allotted to various uses. These decisions are based on a number of factors including constitutional obligations to Treaty Indians, established priorities of use, the practice of open access for recreational fishing, tenure of commercial fishermen and traditional patterns of use.

**The principle of multiple fisheries use is applied where it allows more beneficial use of the resource.** Currently, multiple use occurs on a number of waterbodies, but it is not ideally suited to all situations. Each application of this principle must be considered on an individual basis as each has its own set of circumstances. With multiple use comes the possibility of real or perceived conflicts, especially between sport angling and commercial fishing. Solution of these conflicts may include user education, involvement of users in management, and the seasonal or spatial separation of activities.

**Integrated resource management is used to achieve the objectives of Fisheries Branch with consideration for and by others.** Because the resource management decisions and actions of Fisheries Branch have an obvious and direct effect on fishermen and often affect other branches, departments and agencies not directly involved in the fishery, branch decisions and actions must consider these effects. This requires incorporating the involvement and influence of others in our decision making process. Involvement of these groups assures that their concerns are taken into consideration before decisions are made, and that during their own activities they are aware of Fisheries Branch concerns and goals.

**User groups will be given more responsibility in fisheries management and in decision making.**

By involving user groups in decision making Fisheries Branch will gain better understanding of their concerns, while the users will learn about resource capacity and competing demands. The level of involvement and consultation with user groups will depend on the scope of the issue. Consultation may take place on a province-wide basis or with communities or individuals regarding specific areas. Decisions made through user involvement will gain greater public acceptance and support, and fewer mistakes will be made. User groups will also be encouraged and aided in assuming more direct responsibility for management activities. While the responsibility for conservation, habitat and legislation will remain with the Branch, many of the other management activities can be assumed by user groups. Thus the intention of the branch is to adjust our approaches toward co-management with appropriate user groups and organizations.

**The development of tenure in resource access rights by commercial users is recognized.**

Commercial users who have had access rights to the resource will be recognized as having developed some form of tenure. When tenure has been established, reallocation to other users without some form of compensation, determined through fair negotiation, will only occur if the user fails to meet established performance standards. It is the responsibility of Fisheries Branch to see that fishery specific performance standards are developed and to ensure they are fair and are equitably applied.

## FISHERIES ISSUES AND MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

This section identifies the major issues that presently affect the management of the fish resource. Each is defined to establish a common understanding of the issue both within and outside of Fisheries Branch. Following each issue statement is a listing of management approaches that may be taken to deal with the issue. The purpose of this is to help ensure appropriate, consistent and useful approaches to fisheries issues, and to promote a better understanding of Fisheries Branch decisions and actions with those outside the branch.

## Habitat Management

**Issue:** Habitat loss and degradation have accompanied land use development in most areas of Manitoba. Although some regions such as agro-Manitoba have experienced greater habitat loss than others, concern about this situation is provincial in scope. Programs on habitat classification and the identification and quantification of stresses, losses, and sensitive habitats require development and application. New and experimental technology on wetland, stream/river, lake, and reservoir rehabilitation needs to be researched and used where appropriate, to mitigate losses and create enhancement opportunities.

External funding opportunities allow individuals, groups, associations, schools and governments to cooperate and participate in projects involving the protection, enhancement, rehabilitation, and development of habitat. Some programs also encourage private and corporate donations of riparian habitat or funds for habitat.

**Approaches:**

- Opportunities for habitat restoration, enhancement and development should be actively pursued.
- Habitat enhancement or restoration activities will require inter-agency coordination and cooperation, and the identification of private or public funding.
- Fisheries Branch must take an active role in habitat protection. The branch must liaise with developers that may impact fish habitat, and with agencies such as Manitoba Environment and Federal Fisheries that participate in administering or regulating such developers.
- Fisheries Branch must ensure that habitat issues are dealt with consistent to government review and approval processes.
- Comprehensive solutions to complex habitat problems require research, long term planning and education, and regulatory programs involving affected agencies, users and the general public.
- The responsibility for impact assessment and mitigation associated with projects and programs that affect fisheries habitat lies with the development proponent.
- Allocation to degradative uses should be explicit (i.e. resource losses must be considered as a development cost) and either compensated or mitigated through enhancement and rehabilitation programs.
- Future options with respect to fish habitat must be maintained.

## Exotic Species

**Issue:** The introduction of exotic fish species and aquatic invertebrates poses a threat to Manitoba fisheries. Possible avenues for undesirable introductions include watershed modification and diversion projects, like Garrison; use of live bait; the aquarium-fish trade; the movement and stocking of fish for fish farming and experimental purposes; and, as in the case of zebra mussels, the movement of equipment such as boats, trailers, live wells, etc. which have been exposed to or contain raw water from contaminated areas. Long range impacts of such introductions are difficult to predict, but some pose a threat with irreversible consequences.

**Approaches:**

- The magnitude of adverse impacts from introduction of exotic species is of much greater concern than the likelihood or probability of such impacts. Thus where uncertainties exist a conservative approach will be followed.

- Importation of live fish into Manitoba requires a permit or authorization from Fisheries Branch.

- Any introductions of exotic fish species into northern areas or new watersheds within the Province requires branch Management Committee review and approval.

- Where uncertainties exist priority shall be given to maintaining future options with respect to native fish stocks and the environment.

- The Branch will actively participate in programs to inform the public about the potential impacts of exotic species, means of preventing accidental transfer, and the possibilities of control.

## Fish Stocking

**Issue:** The fish culture program plays an important role in stock enhancement. The hatchery system provides a variety of fish species that are used to augment present stocks, restore fisheries affected by habitat loss, and create further fishing opportunities in areas where limited opportunities exist and public need is demonstrated. To make this approach as effective as possible, a stocking strategy has been developed to reflect the demands and needs of this activity.

**Approaches:**

- The major criterion for fish stocking is demand for the resource by users.
- Public costs and benefits are considered in the priorization and evaluation of stocking programs.
- Stocking programs will give priority to enhancement of self-propagating sport and commercial stocks that have declined due to habitat degradation, are otherwise limited by critical (e.g. spawning) habitat, or are absent from the system.
- Supplementary stocking alone is not an effective enhancement tool for naturally reproducing sport or commercial stocks that are depressed primarly by overexploitation, but may be used as part of a management plan that also addresses exploitation.
- The stocking of catchable-size fish will be restricted to small waterbodies with low productive capacity in areas of high demand.
- Limited (1-3 years) experimental stockings will be considered in situations where significant management/user benefits may result, where surplus stock is or can be made available and where monitoring and evaluation is feasible.
- Stocking of exotic species for the purpose of angling diversity is acceptable.
- Fish or eggs may be sold from provincial hatcheries if deemed to be surplus to our needs.
- Introduction of exotic or native species to watersheds and systems where these species do not exist requires the approval of Management Committee and other affected agencies (e.g. Parks, other jurisdictions).
- User groups will be given opportunity to implement branch approved stocking efforts if Fish Culture cannot meet the demand for such stocking.

## Heritage Species

**Issue:** Some native Manitoba fish species, while not rare at the present time, are threatened by ongoing and future development. Two outstanding examples on the Nelson River are brook trout and the lake sturgeon - both highly desirable species which can be impacted by hydroelectric developments. The preservation of future options with respect to these species is considered a legitimate use of the resource.

**Approaches:**

- Long term protection of heritage species and essential habitat is a management priority.
- Direct and indirect management measures are warranted where heritage species are directly or indirectly affected and threatened.
- Management regulations and programs will be geared towards minimizing the harvest of heritage species in situations where it is necessary.

## Allocation of the Resource

**Issue:** Increasing demands for fisheries resources by commercial net fisheries, commercial sport fisheries, subsistence fisheries, and recreational anglers, and the requirements for maintenance of the resource emphasize the need for guidelines and procedures to deal with allocation both between and among user groups. Such a process will allow consistency in decision making and assist in alleviating conflict situations.

**Approaches:**

- All allocations to use are subject to an initial allocation to resource maintenance (i.e. manage for sustained yield and benefits).
- Allocation to Treaty Indian domestic use has priority over all other allocations to use.
- Resident sport anglers will have general access to fisheries resources. Access may be denied where allocations to resource maintenance and Treaty Indian domestic use do not allow for a harvestable surplus.
- Allocations to non-consumptive use are justified where appropriate.
- Total amount harvested (quota) is a major factor in commercial net fishing while angling quality is a major factor in sport fishing.
- Local economic benefits will be a major criterion for allocation of resource to commercial use.
- The level of commercial development and investment must relate to resource capacity and value.
- Commercial users can achieve and maintain tenure of resource access by meeting established performance standards.
- In the allocation and reallocation of resources to commercial use first priority should be given to performing existing users.
- Resource access rights of tenured commercial users can be made transferable subject to approved guidelines and priorities.
- Commercial net fishing on large road accessible lakes will continue to be a major use in the future.
- When re-allocating the resource from one user to another the branch will ensure that necessary consultation is carried out.

## Treaty Indian Domestic Fishing

**Issue:** Treaty Indians have special fishing rights which are recognized and protected by the Canadian Constitution, various Treaties and provincial policy. Court decisions such as the Supreme Court decision R. vs. Sparrow) have clarified these rights and provided instruction on their administration.

The above mentioned court decision necessitates some basic changes in the attitudes and approaches by government regarding Indian peoples exercising this right. It is imperative that appropriate working adjustments between government and Indian people be made so that the resource base receives adequate protection, a supply of fish adequate for Treaty Indian food fishery is made available from the harvestable surplus, and the remaining surplus is appropriately allocated to other uses.

**Approaches:**

- This use of the fish resource is given highest priority of use allocation.
- Treaty Indian domestic fishing will be administered through policies and procedures based on legislation and negotiations with appropriate representatives of Indian people.
- Harvest and user-demand trends must be monitored to allow for effective management.
- If explicit harvest levels and management agreements are desired they must be established through negotiation with user representatives at a regional level.
- Regular communications with Indian groups must be established and maintained and users must be involved in the administration of domestic fishing management programs.
- Fisheries Branch will be responsible for developing an understanding of Treaty Indian domestic fishing rights and practices with other user groups.

## Economic Viability of Commercial Net Fisheries

**Issue:** The commercial fisheries in the province continue to struggle for economic viability. Fishermen continue to request additional quota or subsidization as a solution. Because of economic, biological, and market constraints, these solutions are often not viable and alternative management techniques and solutions must be considered. New and innovative management techniques must be developed and implemented at the fisherman level to improve the viability of the industry.

**Approaches:**

- Develop licencing and quota systems in consultation with fishermen's groups with an aim toward rationalizing fisheries.
- Review and adjust the freight assistance program to ensure it best meets the needs of fishermen.
- Establish understandings with F.F.M.C. regarding minimum production levels for delivery points.
- Mesh size experiments will be conducted to allow an increase in the production of higher priced species, where risk analysis indicates this acceptable.
- Alternative fishing gear/techniques should be permitted to increase harvest efficiency where feasible.
- Pulse type fisheries will be allowed where established criteria are met.

## Tenure Rights in Resouce Use

**Issue:** Although present policy and licencing systems recognize some priority of commercial users, long term access to the resource and the associated security is not assured. More secure forms of tenure involving certain ownership rights are being developed, and will continue to be developed, that appropriately recognize performance standards, the need and desirability of some specific short term allocations, the effect of physical facilities on tenure considerations, and the advantage of transferability of harvest rights between resource users.

**Approaches:**

- The establishment of individual quotas will be pursed with fishermen and fishermen's groups to aid in quantifying tenure rights.
- Experimental commercial fishing licences will be issued to authorize short term commercial net fishing allocations.
- Commercial users should be warned a season in advance that performance standards are not being met and that failure to meet them will result in a loss of tenurity.
- Commercial users should be made aware of performance standards in writing.
- Understandings should be developed with resource users over the transferability of tenurity.
- The development of a resource licence to authorize the commercial use of the resource by tourist operators will be pursued.

## Multiple Use Fisheries

**Issue:** Multiple use can be a desirable and feasible tool for fish management in specific situations. The concept of several fishery uses on the same body of water is important as it may allow more complete and beneficial use of the resource. Presently, multiple use occurs on several waterbodies in the province through user involvement and the use of management agreements. Potential exists for many more non-conflicting situations.

**Approaches:**

- The major criterion for multiple use is that combined benefits from all uses are greater than from any single use.
- Resource allocations should be explicit or quantified for all user groups.
- In adding new users or establishing multiple use situations, surplus resource must be available and the new use must operate in a manner such that existing fishery values are not reduced.
- Where conflicts arise between users mutual accommodation through consultation, negotiation and management agreements will be pursued by Fisheries Branch.
- Multiple use is most appropriate for large, accessible, productive lakes, in situations where users have different target species and where users can be separated in time or space.
- Commercial gillnet fisheries are not compatible with trophy or high quality sport fisheries in most circumstances.
- In multiple use situations cooperation between user groups is especially important; it is a responsibility of Fisheries Branch to explain how different uses may coexist and to ensure communication between user groups.

## Provision of Adequate Sport Fishing Opportunities

**Issue:** To maintain and enhance the level of sport fishing in Manitoba it is recognized that it is not only important to provide the opportunity to fish but also to provide a quality angling experience. Approaches to management of the sport fishing resource, the regulations that affect its harvest and sport fish stocking must be reviewed and adjusted on an ongoing basis. Angling quality must be better defined to be useful in a management context. Emphasis must be placed on the enhancement and development of new fishing opportunities, especially in high use and urban areas.

**Approaches:**

- User groups should be encouraged to participate in management activities, e.g. education, enhancement and regulation development.
- Stocking will be used to diversify angling opportunity, to rehabilitate fisheries and, where necessary criteria are met, to enhance existing fish populations.
- Techniques to prevent winterkill of important sport fisheries, e.g. aeration, should be employed in high use areas.
- Promotion of catch and release in a manner balanced with proper utilization of the resource should be pursued.
- The use of under-utilized species will be encouraged where required to divert attention from highly sought after game species.
- Under-utilized fisheries in high demand and urban areas should be promoted e.g. the Red and Assiniboine rivers in the City of Winnipeg.

## Less-Consumptive and Non-Consumptive Use Opportunities

**Issue:** Sport fishing opportunities and quality of angling can be increased and improved through reduced harvest and catch and release fishing. Fisheries Branch endorses catch and release as a useful management technique, especially as it pertains to the management of trophy fisheries. Demands exist for non-consumptive use of fish such as hatchery tours and observance of spawning runs.

**Approaches:**

- Fisheries Branch will promote catch and release fishing in a manner consistent with sportsman ethics.
- Harvest reductions will be balanced with the enjoyment and benefits of anglers catching and eating fish.
- Maintenance of trophy quality fisheries requires a significant reduction in normal harvest levels.
- Fisheries Branch will facilitate development of public tours to fish hatcheries and other areas and events of public interest.

## Road Access to Fisheries

**Issue:** Fisheries may experience positive or negative impacts when road access is improved. Because of the recognition of rights of tenured users, new access to fisheries should not leave existing users in a net loss position. Should significant impact be anticipated, consultation with existing users should take place prior to development of access so mitigation measures can be taken or compensation can be agreed upon. The road proponent should consider bearing the cost of compensation/mitigation.

**Approaches:**

- The Branch must participate in planning processes involving remote fisheries and has the responsibility to ensure that fisheries values and impacts are known and considered in such proposals.
- It is the branch responsibility to ensure that remote operators and affected communities are aware of access developments that would impact fisheries and have the opportunity to express concerns.
- Remoteness is essential to the long term viability of the northern tourist lodge industry.
- On larger road accessible or semi-remote lakes limiting access can be justified in terms of economics and resource protection.
- In general, commercial net fisheries benefit from improved road access.
- Road access controls should not be used as a fisheries management tool where other more direct management and allocation options exist.
- Where fisheries values to remote commercial operators are decreased as a result of improved access, efforts to mitigate these effects will be made through regulation adjustment, allocating new resources where possible, and adjustments to type of operation.

## Management Regulations

**Issue:** The control of fish harvest through regulations dealing with seasons, limits and quotas, gear type and licencing is central to most management programs in the branch. Co-ordinated review and revision of regulations between Fisheries Branch, Regional Services and user groups is necessary to ensure effective management. Continued effort must be directed at placing into provincial statutues all those authorities over the fishery resource that are a responsibility of the province. Legislative review must also ensure that Manitoba has the required authorities and flexibility to effectively manage Manitoba's fishery resource.

**Approaches:**

- Sport fishing regulations will be geared to controlling harvest to maintain diversity and quality of angling opportunities.

- Commercial fishing regulations will strive to control harvest and protect stocks through direct means such as quotas rather than by limiting harvest efficiency.

- The involvement of affected users and agencies in the regulatory process is required.

- Regulations are recognized as a vehicle for management education. They must be well conceived and understandable.

- The branch will strive to strike a balance between more specific regulations required to achieve regional and lake management objectives and the users' desire for less complex regulations.

- Major regulatory changes affecting large numbers of anglers or commercial users will be advertised at least one year in advance of implementation to allow for user input and adjustment.

- From a regulatory perspective the underlying objective of federal-provincial relations and negotiations is to improve process and efficiency, and to provide for greater provincial autonomy in regulatory authority.

## Enforcement

**Issue:** Enforcement action is seen as essential to maintaining adequate compliance with regulations and it also promotes voluntary compliance by users.

**Approaches:**

- Compliance with management regulations is important from both a resource (biological) and a user (social) perspective.
- Both enforcement and management education are required to achieve management regulation objectives.
- Fisheries Branch will establish management regulation objectives in conjunction with Regional Services and review and evaluate them on an annual basis. The responsibility for an adequate enforcement effort lies with Regional Services. Evaluation mechanisms are needed to measure effectiveness of the enforcement effort.
- Fisheries Branch will meet with Regional Services at a regional level on at least an annual basis to establish and priorize management regulation objectives and to review management programs.
- From a social perspective overt contraventions of regulations in high use areas are of greatest concern.
- A high rate of voluntary compliance is essential for effective management, therefore Fisheries Branch must ensure that users understand the need for specific regulations.
- Natural Resources Officers have a primary role in management education and user feedback and it is the responsibility of Fisheries Branch to ensure that Resource Officers have the necessary background information to convey objectives and rationale for management regulations to users.
- The opinions and requests of user groups will be considered in developing enforcement focus.
- From a management perspective, a major benefit of the TIP program is that it allows for user input and involvement in the enforcement process.

## Licencing

**Issue:** Licencing represents the primary mechanism for the allocation of fish stocks to sport, commercial and domestic use. It also serves as an important management tool in other ways.

Regulations and policy regarding the licencing criteria and procedures of net fisheries are essential in the commercial fishing industry. Individual transferable quota systems have been introduced on lakes Winnipeg and Winnipegosis. This system needs to be evaluated so that necessary changes can be made and the advisability of applying the system to other lakes can be determined. Regardless of the system used, all major net fisheries in the province should have formalized licencing systems. A licencing system can also provide a vehicle through which resource rent may be collected.

Licencing commercial use of the resource by the tourist industry provides recognition of allocation similar to commercial net fisheries and an opportunity to establish performance standards for these fisheries.

**Approaches:**

- Anglers will be encouraged to practice conservation through provision of Conservation Licences.
- Resource licencing systems will be developed to include the tourist industry to which direct allocations of fish are made.
- Annual licencing of commercial users is subject to performance standards. Licence cancellation or changes for non-performance require formal notification and at least one operating season to re-establish satisfactory performance.

## Resource Rent or Royalties

**Issue:** It is incumbent upon government to ensure that citizens of Manitoba realize an acceptable return from commercial use of the resource. As fishing becomes more profitable resource rent systems such as royalties where levies would be charged in proportion to the authorized catch should be implemented. A more immediate alternative would be for fishermen to develop their own check-off systems to cover a portion of the management costs for their fishery, e.g. advisory board meetings, enhancement efforts, public information, etc..

**Approaches:**

- Fisheries Branch will encourage commercial fishermen to develop check-off systems similar in concept to the one in place on Chitek Lake.

- Systems such as royalties where levies would be charged in proportion to the authorized catch will be investigated.

## Public Involvement in Management

**Issue:** It is recognized that resource users and the general public wish to be given a more significant role in the management of fisheries. This involvement often provides for better, more stable management and achievement of greater value (both social and economic) from resource use. In this process Fisheries Branch will retain primary responsibility to ensure fish harvest is managed on a biologically sustainable basis, but will share decision-making in regard to fish harvest with appropriate user groups.

**Approaches:**

- The relationship between the involved public and Fisheries Branch will be actively developed from informational to consultative to cooperative management.
- Non-government organizations with an active interest in fish and fisheries will be encouraged to participate in management of the resources.
- It is recognized and accepted that sharing management responsibility involves sharing both authority and accountability.
- Effective approaches to cooperative management require development and refinement, and this will be a priority initiative of all Branch staff.

## Public Information and Communication

**Issue:** Resource users are recognized as the primary clients of management and are central to most management problems and solutions. They must be informed about fisheries policies, activities and events to understand and accept management programs and regulations. It is also recognized that the general public needs to understand that Manitoba fisheries are being managed in a manner consistent with sustainable development principles. A public information strategy needs to be developed to ensure an organized approach can be implemented.

**Approaches:**

- Newsletters explaining management approaches/changes will be sent to individual members of user groups.
- Regular liaison will be maintained with user groups by attending meetings, phone calls (including accepting collect calls) and maintaining a high profile while collecting management information.
- Articles will be provided for user publications that explain management approaches.
- Participation in shows appropriate to providing fisheries users with information, will be encouraged.
- Newspaper and magazine articles, specific newsletters for user groups and television and radio appearances will be used to provide information to members of the public.
- The development of school programs/courses will be encouraged using approaches developed from Project WILD.
- Information pamphlets for general distribution will be developed.
- Cooperative efforts with Fish Futures, Fort Whyte Centre for Environmental Education, and other organizations involved in environmental education should be developed to allow use of valuable educational expertise forums and manpower.

## User Funding

**Issue:** Both commercial and sport fishing users are asking government to develop mechanisms to allow them to support programs they want. Other provinces, including Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, have implemented enhancement funds where a portion of licence revenues are earmarked for resource enhancement programs. Such user-pay programs or funds can occur within or outside of government. Fisheries associations in Manitoba have successfully raised funds for projects which are then carried out with the cooperation and guidance of regional Fisheries staff. Improved mechanisms are required to allow users to contribute financially to management programs.

**Approaches:**

- Mechanisms for dedicated funding can be established within or outside of government. In the former case Fisheries Branch would maintain most management control while in the latter case some management responsibility and authority would be held by funders.

- Such mechanisms could involve compulsory licence/production check-offs and/or voluntary contributions.

- A non-government structure for the administration and management of dedicated funds may be desirable and appropriate, and Fisheries Branch will work with user groups to establish these arrangements.

- The project and program criteria for management of such funds should be broad enough to allow for a wide range of habitat and resources enhancement programs, including lake reclamation and stocking, with direct sport, commercial and domestic user benefits.

- The user funding mechanism must be flexible enough to accommodate special and one-time contributions directed at specific projects.

**Aquaculture**

**Issue:** New federal and regional initiatives in this field necessitate a review of federal, provincial and departmental roles, past experience and areas of new opportunities. Policies and guidelines are required to deal with aquaculture of non-traditional or native species, the role of government in supplying stocks for private aquaculture, and the role of the aquaculture industry in meeting government stocking demands.
As outlined in the Aquaculture Policy, Fisheries Branch will take the lead in developing better support for the aquaculture industry in the province.

**Approaches:**

- Fisheries Branch will work towards improved coordination and information exchange with and among industry operators, other provincial branches and departments, and federal agencies.

- A comprehensive information package for the public on intensive fish farming will be prepared.

- Private operators should be encouraged to take a lead role in development of aquaculture through participation with regional fisheries staff on experimental projects.

- Fisheries Branch will investigate opportunities for private operators to provide fish to supplement provincial stocking of public waters.

- Fish farming licences will continue to be issued to commercial fish farmers and for fish farming in Crown waters.

**Bait Fishing**

**Issue:** The bait fishing industry in Manitoba is geared to market demand. It is relatively stable, including the live bait fish industry which has stabilized since the moratorium on expansion was lifted in 1988. The bait fish industry, including the live bait fish portion, should be encouraged to develop so maximum economic benefits may accrue to Manitobans. Potential exists for successful aquaculture of bait fish.

**Approaches:**

- It is recognized that bait fishing not only represents a commercial activity in itself, but that it functions in an important support role for the sport fishing industry.
- The use of live bait fish should continue to be limited to the present waters where currently allowed in Division I.
- The harvest of live bait fish for commercial purposes from waters where its use is not permitted should be investigated.
- The live bait industry and live bait users should be informed of the potential environmental threat of unplanned introductions to natural waters. Legislation should be reviewed and altered as necessary to ensure protection.
- The potential for bait fish aquaculture should be investigated as a method of providing a year round supply of live bait fish for the industry.
- The licencing and administration of the bait fish program should be decentralized to the regions.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of this Strategy, as mentioned in the Introduction, is to facilitate consistent and rational management of Manitoba fisheries. The Strategy is a critical document in the Fisheries Branch planning framework that organizes the activities of the branch and allows it to carry out and fulfill its responsibilities in an organized and controlled manner that is understandable and acceptable to branch employees, other government branches and agencies, user groups and the general public. At the next level of the planning framework are sport, commercial and habitat sectional strategies. These are consistent with the principles and management approaches outlined in this document and further refine Branch direction in these areas.

This document coupled with the sectional strategies provides the regions with direction and guidance in the development and maintenance of Regional Fisheries plans. These plans outline the major fisheries issues and opportunities in each region and identify objectives and activities required to meet those objectives. These Plans have a time horizon of three to five years and are updated annually. The annual Regional Fisheries Program is a combination of ongoing functions as identified in staff performance standards and annual objectives and projects associated with the Regional Fisheries Plan.

In addition to rationalizing the activities of the Branch, this process also provides a mechanism for coordination of management activities and priorization of budgets and staff. Regional Fisheries Plans are updated in March and reviewed and endorsed by the Director and Chiefs in April of the same year. Past fiscal year activities and objectives are reported on during the same period.

The roles of staff relative to this branch Strategy are varied. The Director is responsible for the overall functioning of the Strategy, periodic review, update of issues and primary goals to reflect government policy direction, and changes in program emphasis. The Chiefs of Sport/Commercial and Habitat sections are responsible for the development and coordination of their section program and for the maintenance of their sectional strategies. The Chief of Regional Fisheries Management and the Regional Fisheries Managers are responsible for maintaining and updating Regional Fisheries Plans and for the development of activities that will be directed at achieving branch management goals. Finally the Regional Management Section implements, supervises, analyzes and reports on each of their activities annually.